

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 00897 021013Z
ACTION SY-05

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 IO-13 JUSE-00
NSAE-00 SNM-02 TRSE-00 USIA-06 NSC-05 OES-06 OMB-01
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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 3202
DEA HQS WASHDC
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

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ANKARA FOR RD WARNER; PARIS FOR RD PICINI; DEPT FOR A/SY/FO/
NEA; DEA HQS FOR EN/CASEY; DAMASCUS FOR NCO

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ASEC, SNAR
SUBJECT: OPIUM CULTIVATION IN BEKAA VALLEY OF LEBANON

REF: (A) ANKARA 1434, (B) PARIS 04692, (C) DAMASCUS 1145

1. RSO CALLED ON COL. OSMAN OSMAN ON FEB 28 TO DISCUSS
SUBJECT. OSMAN INDICATED THAT A SUBSTANTIAL EFFORT WAS UNDERWAY
TO ORGANIZE OPIUM CULTIVATION IN THE BEKAA VALLEY. ACCORDING
TO HIS SOURCES, FROM FOUR TO TEN TURKISH "EXPERTS" HAVE BEEN
BROUGHT IN TO SUPERVISE THE PLANTING AND CULTIVATION. HE HAD
NO SPECIFIC INFORMATION REGARDING THE SIZE OF THE CROP BUT
GUESSED THAT IT WOULD BE QUITE SUBSTANTIAL AND THAT IT WAS
THE ORGANIZER'S PLAN TO REPLACE HASHISH WITH OPIUM AS THE
PRIMARY CASH CROP.

2. REGARDING LEBANESE GOVERNMENT PLANS CONCERNING
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THE ABOVE, COL. OSMAN STATED THAT "THEY COULD DO NOTHING."
HE STRESSED HIS LACK OF MANPOWER, TRANSPORTATION,
COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT AND EVEN FIREARMS. IN
ADDITION TO THESE PROBLEMS, THERE WAS A POLITICAL
PROBLEM. SINCE THE BEKAA VALLEY IS OCCUPIED AND
CONTROLLED BY THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE (SYRIAN ARMY),
ONLY THIS ELEMENT COULD TAKE ACTION TO SUPPRESS THE

CULTIVATION. IN COL. OSMAN'S DISCUSSIONS WITH HIS SYRIAN COUNTERPARTS ON THE SUBJECT, THEY WERE EXTREMELY UNCOOPERATIVE. HE BELIEVES THEIR NONCOOPERATION IS BASED ON A POLITICAL DECISION MADE IN DAMASCUS NOT TO INVOLVE THE PEACE-KEEPING FORCES IN ANY NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION OPERATIONS. SUCH A DECISION IS BASED ON THE FACT THAT THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE ANTI-SYRIAN ACTIVITY, INCLUDING RIOTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE SYRIANS, IN THE BEKAA, PARTICULARLY IN BAALBEK. SINCE THE CULTIVATION OF HASHISH AND OPIUM INVOLVES LARGE NUMBERS OF LEBANESE IN THE VALLEY, SUPPRESSION MEASURES UNDERTAKEN BY THE SYRIAN ARMY WOULD CAUSE INCREASED PROBLEMS IN AN ALREADY TENSE SITUATION. ACCORDING TO COL. OSMAN, THE SYRIANS HAVE TAKEN THE POSITION THAT NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION IS A LEBANESE PROBLEM, WITH FULL KNOWLEDGE THAT THE GOL SECURITY/POLICE FORCES ARE PRESENTLY INCAPABLE OF TAKING MEASURES TO CONTROL IT.

3. COL. OSMAN STATED THAT HE HAS HOPES OF APPREHENDING ONE OF THE TURKISH EXPERTS IF ANY OF THEM COME TO BEIRUT, BUT THAT HE IS HELPLESS IN THE BEKAA WITHOUT SYRIAN COOPERATION.

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